

REMARKS

Initially, applicants would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for discussing this case with applicants' representative on May 12, 2004. In accordance with the discussion, the present paper is being submitted.

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 1, 7 and 13 will have been amended. Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance.

Applicants' invention, as recited in claim 1, 7 or 13, includes, *inter alia*, judging whether a level of mastery for a possessed item satisfies a predetermined condition, and when the level of mastery satisfies the predetermined condition, giving the character an ability, linked with the item, for use in the game. The level of mastery for the item is determined in accordance with the character's activity (or use of the item) while possessing the item. It is submitted that none of the applied references, alone or in any proper combination, discloses the claimed combination of features of the present invention, as recited in claims 1, 7 or 13.

Claims 2 - 6, 8 - 12 and 14 - 25 depend from claims 1, 7 or 13 (either directly or with intervening claims). Accordingly, applicants submit that these claims are patentably distinct from the cited art, at least based upon the recitations of claim 1, 7 or 13, but also based on their own limitations.

The amendments to the claims do not add any prohibited new matter.

Entry of the present amendment is believed to be proper, even though this Amendment is being filed in response to a final Office Action. That is, it is submitted that no new issues have been raised that would require further consideration or search.

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The above amendments have been presented merely for the purpose of clarification, and not to overcome the applied prior art. Accordingly, no estoppel is deemed to result from any of the present amendments.

Should there be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed number.

Respectfully submitted,
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